



APPROPRIATIONS & CROSSCUTTING WEEKLY NEWS

Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

Week Ending February 9, 2018

BIPARTISAN SENATE BUDGET DEAL REACHED

The Senate has reached a massive two-year budget deal that would increase spending levels for both defense and domestic programs. The deal is expected to increase budget caps by \$300 billion over the next two years. The bill includes some key things:

- Funds the government through March 23
- Raises the debt ceiling beyond the midterm elections
- Includes over \$81B in disaster aid funding
- Removes sequestration

The agreement, if passed, allows House and Senate Appropriations chairmen to finish an omnibus spending package, ending the cycle of short-term government funding bills, at least for a few months. The deal effectively deals with many stalled policy priorities that have stalled in the Senate for some time now.

Once passed in the Senate, the bill must go back to the House for a vote. Nancy Pelosi said Wednesday that Democrats would not support the two year package without a commitment from Speaker Paul Ryan to an open floor debate on immigration that includes a vote to protect Dreamers from deportation—similar to the promise made from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to democrats in his chamber.

Meanwhile, the current stopgap funding resolution expires at midnight on Thursday, February 8, and we will continue to monitor the funding saga as it unfolds.

Nominee for EPA Deputy Advances in Committee

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee voted Wednesday, 11-10 along party lines, to approve the nomination of former fossil fuel lobbyist Andrew Wheeler to be EPA's Deputy Administrator. Wheeler's nomination had previously won committee approval in November, but didn't get a vote on the Senate floor. Democrats had threatened to block environmental nominees because they objected to the nomination of Kathleen Hartnett White to lead the Council on Environmental Quality. White withdrew her nomination on Sunday, clearing the way for Democrats to agree to a vote on Wheeler.



Earth Day 2018

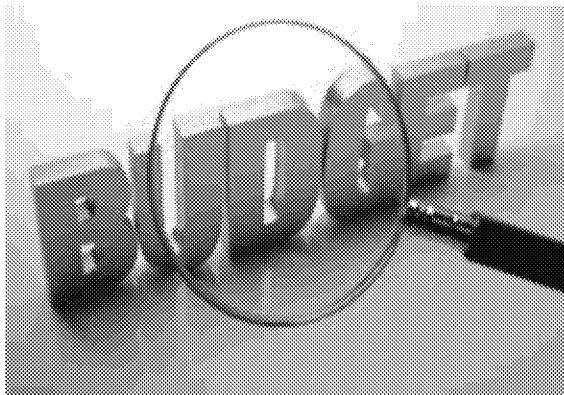
It may be hard to imagine that before 1970, a factory could spew black clouds of toxic into the air or dump tons of toxic waste into a nearby stream, and that was perfectly legal. They could not be taken to court to stop it.

How was that possible? Because there was no EPA, no Clean Air Act, no Clean Water Act. There were no legal or regulatory mechanisms to protect our environment.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon and Congress established the U.S. EPA in response to the growing public demand for cleaner water, air, and land. EPA was tasked with monitoring, standard-setting, and enforcement activities to help protect our environment and to help Americans make a cleaner and safer environment. EPA research has been crucial to environmental legislature such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Pollution Prevention Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

In spring 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson created Earth Day as a way to force this issue onto the national agenda. Twenty million Americans demonstrated in different U.S. cities, and it worked!

Although Earth Day is celebrated on April 22 each year, let's strive to make every day Earth Day!



2018 EPA Budget Symposium

The Team continues to move forward on planning EPA's first Budget Symposium for Congressional Authorizing Committees. The President's FY 2019 Budget Request is currently scheduled for February 12, 2018. The Symposium will be held onsite at EPA's Washington DC Headquarters. More information will be provided on the details of this historical event soon. Stay tuned!

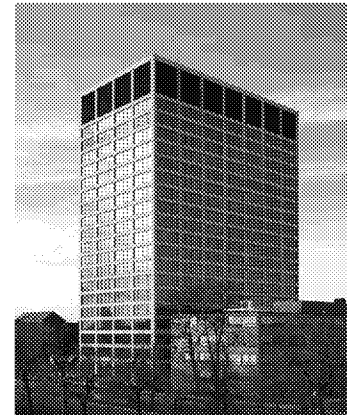
Facilities and Space Consolidation

EPA is consolidating human resources support services into EPA owned buildings in Cincinnati, OH and Research Triangle Park, NC. This decision will save taxpayer dollars and streamline management layers. EPA staff will be given the opportunity to relocate to an EPA owned facility by the summer of 2018.

What does this mean? EPA delivers HR support to its workforce through a variety of organizations and support models, both centralized, through three HR shared service centers, and decentralized, with HR resources embedded in organizations.

Who is the customer? The goal is to continue to improve customer service, provide more consistent HR support, and foster increased confidence from customers. The change further illustrates the agency's commitment to providing service in the most efficient manner to customers across the agency, and this consolidation will positively impact staff coordination and service delivery.

The centers in Cincinnati and RTP will process personnel and benefits actions for the agency's employees. The move will be completed in the summer of 2018. Staff affected by this consolidation will be given the option to relocate to one of the other locations, retire, or separate from the Agency. The Agency will pay for relocation costs.



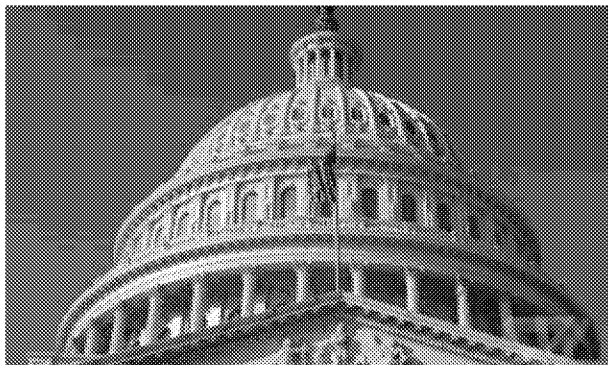
Congressional Inquiries

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Agency Rulemakings

Senator Markey: Formaldehyde Risk Assessment Status Update

Interior Subcommittee on Appropriations/Environment & Public Works Committee: IRIS, National Academy of Sciences Review Process

House Science, Space, and Technology: Honest Act Implementation



White House Aide Resigns

White House staff secretary Rob Porter, a mostly unknown but deeply influential aide who spends almost every day by the President's side, said Wednesday he plans to resign following abuse allegations from his ex-wives.

In a pair of reports published by the Daily Mail, Porter's two ex-wives detailed episodes of verbal and physical abuse. The Daily Mail published a copy of a protective order obtained by Porter's wife in 2010 and later published photographs of Porter's first wife with a black eye she alleges came from Porter punching her.

Miscellaneous Tidbit

The President wants to have a military parade in DC. Not all lawmakers are on board with that idea, with Senator Lindsey Graham calling the idea "cheesy and shows a sign of weakness".

Program Spotlight This Week

ORD

Improved Usability of EPA Database Supporting TSCA Implementation

This week, EPA ORD is making available a significantly updated version of the Web-based Ecotoxicology Knowledgebase (ECOTOX), which serves as the source of toxicity effects data currently being used to evaluate the safety of existing chemicals under the Lautenberg Act. ECOTOX includes data on more than 11,000 chemicals and 12,000 species, and is available online to users all over the world. Each month, 6,000-10,000 unique users perform 150,000 to 200,000 data downloads. This database provides users with a cost-effective, non-duplicative means of locating high-quality ecological effects data to support chemical decision making across a wide range of uses. ECOTOX data are used for all ecological risk assessments supporting pesticide registrations and re-registrations, all ambient water quality criteria for chemicals published since 1985, and assessments used in emergency response. The updated version of ECOTOX is being released in beta form to gather feedback before becoming final. It includes new visualization tools and other improvements to help users better identify the most critical data from current outputs more quickly.

Building Statistical Capacity to Assess Waters in Virginia

On Monday, at a meeting organized by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, ORD's Karen Blocksom demonstrated a function she created in the R programming language to identify distinct taxa in water samples to a group of state and regional biologists. The R programming language is used for statistical analysis by many state programs using National Aquatic Resource Survey (NARS) approaches and tools to monitor and report on the condition of their waters. This technical support helps EPA better support states that might be struggling with R, which has a steep learning curve, while enabling EPA to learn about tools that states are developing that we may be able to use.

Moving from Contamination to Economic Revitalization in Great Lakes

ORD researchers will join federal and state partners Tuesday and Wednesday in Chicago, at the EPA Region 5 and EPA Great Lakes National Program Office-hosted Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) Revitalization Summit. Great Lakes AOCs were established in response to legacy contamination of heavy metals, polychlorinated biphenyls, and dioxin, as well as to combined sewage overflows and stormwater runoff from Great Lakes Coastal communities. There are 27 remaining AOCs on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes. The goals are to restore the beneficial uses of the aquatic ecosystems that have been impaired and, in many cases, to accomplish economic revitalization. NHEERL researchers have worked with partners to apply Remediation to Restoration to Revitalization in the St. Louis River estuary and plan to take lessons learned from that work to the summit. NRMRL has five active field projects within the Great Lakes AOCs that are venues for development of alternative monitoring technologies and innovative analysis approaches to evaluate remedy effectiveness.